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1961/11/13

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FROM GENEVA TO FOREIGN OFFICE
(United Kingdom Mission)

Cypher/OTF

FOREIGN OFFICE (SECRET) AND
WHITEHALL (SECRET) DISTRIBUTION

Mr. Carter

No. 789

November 13, 1961

D: 8.13 p.m. November 13, 1961

R: 7.39 p.m. November 13, 1961

SECRET

Addressed to Foreign Office telegram No. 789 of November 13.

Repeated for information to:	Vientiane	Manila
	Washington	Bangkok
	Canberra	Karachi
	Wellington	Singapore

And Saving to:	Moscow	New Delhi
	Paris	Ottawa

GUARD

Following from Malcolm Macdonald.

The following is an appreciation of the present state of the Laos Conference.

2. I think we could get agreements between all delegations without much difficulty on the texts of articles on the following outstanding questions: voting, investigations, I.C.C. function regarding arms imports, and timetable for withdrawal of foreign troops. Unless Paris proves unexpectedly difficult, it should also not be impossible to agree on compromise draft concerning the French presence. In my opinion we could achieve all these within a comparatively few days if the friendly atmosphere of a week ago, and the disposition of the Communist delegations as well as our friends to make mutual concessions on drafts, had been maintained.

3. But the atmosphere has deteriorated considerably in the last several days owing to the following developments:

(a) Boun Oum's and Phoumi's refusal so far to agree to the next proposed meeting between the three Princes in Laos. Coupled with the stepping up of breaches of the cease-fire, allegedly primarily at the instigation of Phoumi, this has revived a deep suspicion, not only amongst the Communist Delegations, but also amongst the neutral delegations

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(including India), that the Vientiane group wish to sabotage an agreement in Geneva, and probably to renew fighting in Laos, and that in this they are receiving support from the American representatives in Laos and in decisive quarters in Washington;

(b) our failure so far to give an assurance that the four non-Geneva members of SEATO will associate themselves with the undertaking to respect the wishes of the Laotian Government concerning non-protection by coalitions or military alliances. I need not expand on this, for you already know the damage this has done;

(c) our revival of drafts of two additional outstanding articles in the agreement, i.e. those concerning "access" by the I.C.C. and the function of the I.C.C. in assisting in the implementation of the declarations of neutrality (see enclosure to Brinson's letter of October 10, to Secande: Articles 1 and 3). The Communist delegations have known our proposals regarding these for several weeks, but discussion on them was postponed pending our discussions on the other articles which have occupied us recently. When I renewed the suggestion that we should now discuss these at the end of last week (in circumstances already prejudiced by developments (a) and (b) above), the Communist delegations reacted strongly. They feel that these drafts are now unnecessary in the light of our agreements or near-agreements on other articles and that our purpose in pressing them can only be that we wish "to give the Commission powers to control the neutrality of Laos". Pushkin also objected strongly to my reverting to the question of private armies; but it may be possible to get round this in the way suggested in my immediately following telegram.

4. If the conference is to succeed, it is important that we should get effective action on (a), (b) and (c) above as soon as possible.

5. Regarding (a), surely the time has more than come for President Kennedy to instruct his Ambassador in Vientiane to indicate absolutely clearly to Boun Oum and Phoumi that unless they
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cooperate in the ways desired, American support will be withdrawn from them. Vientiane telegram No. 1290 of November 11, makes clear what we must all have suspected recently, that the American representatives in Laos are not (repeat not) carrying out loyally the policy of the American Administration in this matter. This is such a vital issue that I trust it can be put personally to President Kennedy in whatever manner is most appropriate and expedient. It would probably be helpful for this to be done whilst Harriman is in the United States until after his birthday on November 15.

6. As regards (b) you are already taking action with a view to a favourable decision being taken by the SEATO Council representatives this Wednesday. Delay beyond that will further prejudice the prospects of a successful conclusion to the conference here.

7. As regards (c), I feel that the draft article about access for the I.C.C. is no longer necessary, as all its points are implied in other texts. As regards the other draft, although it has substance which we would like to secure if possible, I doubt whether we can in fact get Russian and other Communist agreement to it. The neutralists, including India, will not (repeat not) support us on it. I, therefore, think that we may come to a point where we have to choose between abandoning this proposed article, or abandoning the hope of getting an international agreement on Laos. In my judgment the collection of other articles on which we expect to get full agreement is so valuable that the abandoning of that solitary matter is a price worth paying.

8. However, hitherto the Americans and Canadians here, strongly instigated by their Governments have attached great importance to these existing drafts referred to in paragraph 2(c) above; and it would have been inexpedient hitherto to put forward arguments against them. In the last three days my advisers and I have started the process of converting the Americans and Canadians to our views, and as a result our three delegations plus the French have today decided to recommend to our governments amendments as proposed in my immediately following telegram. These go a considerable way towards meeting Russian and other objections, and if other matters go well, it is not absolutely impossible that we could reach agreement on

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something like them. But I am not confident that this will be so. However, the next step must clearly be to try to persuade Washington and Ottawa to agree to these modifications of our proposals.

Foreign Office please pass Vientiane No. 216, Washington No. 275, Canberra No. 101, Wellington No. 98, Manila No. 83, Bangkok No. 212, Karachi No. 17, Singapore No. 187 and Saving to Moscow No. 211, Paris No. 278, New Delhi No. 107, Ottawa No. 144.

[Not repeated to Vientiane pending departmental decision.
Repeated as requested to remainder of Foreign Service posts.]

[Copy sent to Telegraph Section C.R.O. for repetition to
C.R.O. posts named.]

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